



In This Issue ▶ ▶ ▶

Lawyer feedback requested; Family services initiatives; Immigration stop dates; Reminder: change in timing of payments; Billing tips

Lawyer feedback requested

Legal Services Society (LSS) tariff lawyers recently received by e-mail a link to the second online LSS Tariff Lawyer Satisfaction Survey. The e-mail was sent by PME Inc., which is conducting the survey on our behalf. Please respond to the survey and let us know what you think of our performance over the last three years. We will compare the results of this survey to the feedback you provided on the first survey in 2004. Your input will help us to continue to improve our lawyers' services. A report on the survey results will be available on the LSS website in July 2007.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Janice Staryk at (604) 601-6148 or at janice.staryk@lss.bc.ca.

Family services initiatives

On November 1, 2006, LSS introduced a series of significant family law initiatives. These changes are designed to offer a greater range of services to our clients. A key objective of the initiatives is a renewed priority for early consensual dispute resolution.

The four elements of these initiatives are outlined in a Backgrounder posted on our website at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Online resources > LSS programs and policies). The four elements are:

- ➔ an expanded role for duty counsel to attend case conferences in selected locations;
- ➔ expanded support for mediation and collaborative practice;
- ➔ the introduction of Dispute Resolution Services for a broad range of client issues; and
- ➔ expanded Extended Services authorizations to support client efforts to negotiate reasonable settlements in family cases.

In the first few months of these initiatives we doubled the number of cases authorized for Dispute Resolution Services compared against the previous volume of Limited Scope referrals. We are beginning to see lawyers creatively use DRS referrals to obtain negotiated settlements.

However, the response to case conference representation by duty counsel has been lower than expected. Case conference referrals are intended to be a streamlined way for duty counsel to continue services to clients who have a reasonable chance of resolving or narrowing their issues at a case conference. You can get a referral by calling your referring office. We encourage you to make use of this service where it is available.

Despite research that consistently demonstrates that mediation is an effective way to resolve a wide range of family disputes, over the last three years LSS had only 30 family cases per year that involved mediation. Our renewed emphasis on mediation and collaborative practice is intended to change this. Increased use of mediation benefits clients, and will permit LSS to examine in more detail the appropriate role for counsel for tariff purposes, build our relationship with others in the family justice system, and establish effective ways for LSS to support mediation through training and resources.

If you have questions or comments about these family services initiatives, please send them to lawyersresources@lss.bc.ca.

Immigration stop dates

LSS is removing the fiscal year-end stop dates on immigration referrals. Immigration referrals will no longer automatically terminate on March 31 each year. Effective February 1, 2007, immigration referrals will be issued with the following stop dates:

- ➔ PIF preparation – 2 months from the date of assignment
- ➔ Refugee hearings – 12 months from the date of assignment
- ➔ Immigration appeals – 24 months from the date of assignment.

All outstanding appeal and hearing referral stop dates will be adjusted by LSS to reflect the new stop dates. Further details will be distributed in an upcoming *Notice to Counsel*.

These changes follow improvements to the Immigration Tariff introduced last November, including an increase for hearing preparation. For details, please see the Message to the Bar that accompanied the tariff revisions.

Reminder: change in timing of payments

Effective January 31, 2007, LSS changed the timing of payments by cheque from weekly to bi-weekly. Payments made by direct deposit (EFT) will continue to be paid on a weekly basis. See the [October LAF](#) for more information at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Legal Aid Fax).

Billing tips

1. When claiming the "resolution of multiple informations/indictments" fee for criminal matters, please record the information/indictment on the same account that you are claiming the fee. The fee must be linked to that information/indictment only.
2. When recording the court location on billing forms, please enter the court location where the matter is heard, not where the charge(s) originated.